A case study of one EFL writing teacher's feedback on discourse for advanced learners in China

ZHENJING WANG

University of Auckland & China University of Geosciences (Beijing)

ABSTRACT

Taking-up Borg's (2003) call for research that addresses specific aspects of language teaching in relation to teacher cognition, this study explores writing teachers' feedback practices on discourse and their beliefs about writing, feedback and discourse. This paper reports on a case study of one teacher as part of a larger study of feedback practices and beliefs held by experienced English language writing teachers in Chinese tertiary education. Data were collected over a 2-month period using document analysis of marked assignments with the teacher's written feedback, observations of whole-class oral feedback after written feedback and a post-observation interview. The teacher focussed on six discourse features in feedback, namely: cohesion, meta-discourse, macrostructure, topical development, rhetorical function development and purpose, audience and context of situation. She provided more negative feedback indirectly in text by pointing out problems rather than providing solutions to help students revise. The

Address for correspondence: Zhenjing Wang, University of Auckland, DALSL Level 8, 18 Waterloo Quadrant, Central Auckland 1142, New Zealand; Email: zwan123@aucklanduni.ac.nz

University of Sydney Papers in TESOL, 6, 21-42.

 ISSN: 1834-3198 (Print) & 1834-4712 (Online)

teacher's feedback practices generally matched her stated beliefs. However, mismatches were observed between some specific feedback strategies and her stated beliefs due to contextual factors. The feedback strategies depended on how she thought these strategies would impact on students cognitively and affectively.

INTRODUCTION

Many teachers are familiar with students who can construct accurate sentences but are unable to produce appropriate written texts. This situation partly results from learners' difficulty in making their writing cohesive and coherent (Basturkmen, 2002). Appropriate teacher feedback is needed in order for them to understand their discourse problems, gain help when making revisions and thus improve their writing ability. In research into teachers' feedback, corrective feedback on grammatical problems is an area that has been extensively investigated (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener, 2005; Ferris, 2001, 2004; Hyland 2001; Lee, 2004), but there is less published research on teachers' feedback on discourse problems beyond sentence level.

Feedback on discourse

In socio-cultural theory learning occurs within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1980) which is the area between what learners can do independently and what they can do with assistance. Advanced learners may be able to self-correct grammatical errors, but they have difficulty in writing cohesively and coherently without noticing discourse problems in their writing. Second language writing teachers can explain where the text fails to accomplish what the student writer would like to express, provide strategies for remedying these problems, and explain why. This is a role which the student writer himself/herself as well as untrained peer students

may not be able to perform as effectively (Goldstein, 2004). It implies that what teachers provide feedback on and the strategies they use to do this regarding the coherence of students' writing can help improve the quality of learners' writing.

Although coherence and cohesion are essential elements of good writing, SLA research is inconclusive about what discourse problems should be focused on (Lee, 2008a; Suri & McCoy, 1993). Lee (2008a), in a study of secondary school English writing teachers in Hong Kong, found that although teachers believed coherence was important for writing, most feedback addressed grammatical correction (94.1%), which also contradicted the principles recommended in local curriculum documents. Similarly, Todd and his colleagues' (2007) investigation of two tutors' in-text comments showed mismatches between tutors' comments and students' writing problems in terms of connectedness. Little research evidence exists to shed light on the reasons for mismatches between teachers' feedback practices and their beliefs.

Teacher beliefs about writing, feedback and discourse

Teachers' beliefs play an important role in shaping their classroom practice (Borg, 1998; Burns, 1992). These beliefs have been found to be personal, practical, unconscious and systematic (Borg, 2003), and could be well-formed even before teachers receive any initial training (Pajares, 1992). Further, they seem to be very deep-rooted and continue to influence teachers throughout their professional lives (Borg, 2003). Research into the relationship between beliefs and classroom practice has found consistencies (e.g., She, 2000) and inconsistencies (e.g., Borko & Niles, 1982; Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Nunan, 1987) between stated beliefs and practices. The reasons for such mismatches would seem to be highly complex (Phipps, 2010; Phipps & Borg, 2009), but there is much evidence to suggest that teachers' ability to teach in line with their beliefs is influenced primarily by contextual factors, such as time and lack of appropriate

materials, poor student performance and lack of motivation (Borg, 2003; Fang, 1996; Graden, 1996), and/or by student factors (Bailey *et al*., 1996; Richards, 1998).

Research into teacher beliefs has been carried out primarily in relation to grammar teaching and reading (see Borg 2006 for an overview). There have been studies on teacher beliefs about writing, although much of this has been conducted on first language writing (e.g., Fang, 1996). Studies of teachers' beliefs about second language writing have been rare. Burns (1992) looked at the beliefs and writing instruction practices of six inexperienced ESL teachers in Australia and uncovered an "extremely complex and interrelated network of underlying beliefs" (1992:59), and found that these beliefs were reflected in differences in the teachers' classroom practices.

In teacher feedback research, however, not much is known about teachers' beliefs and how they impact on individual feedback practices. Diab (2005), conducting a case study to compare the beliefs held by one native English teacher and two of her international students, found mismatches between the teacher's beliefs and her students' expectations. The teacher believed that grammatical error correction did not improve students' writing and comments about organization and topic development were very important, yet students expected correction of their grammatical errors. The study also showed that the students' views influenced how the teacher provided feedback. More recently, Lee (2008a) reported several mismatches between teachers' beliefs and practices in terms of teachers' feedback focus, strategies and purpose, and concluded that teachers' practices were influenced by contextual factors such as curriculum and assessment. These factors have not been systematically incorporated into most feedback research designs, however, and we know little about their potential impact on teachers' feedback practices. It is worthwhile closely studying

teachers' feedback on discourse related to their classroom instruction and exploring why they provide feedback in the way they do.

METHODOLOGY

Research questions

This case study used an interpretive-qualitative approach to explore how an experienced teacher gave feedback on discourse features in student writing. The data I discuss here are from a study of one teacher as part of a larger study of feedback practices and beliefs held by experienced English language writing teachers in China. It addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the teacher provide feedback on discourse features?
2. What strategies does she use?
3. What is the relationship between her feedback practices and her beliefs?

Participant

This study was conducted in the context of higher education in China. I selected an experienced Chinese English teacher with the pseudonym Jane from a university where English writing was taught as a separate subject in a genre-based approach over a period of 16 weeks concentrating on the requirement of particular texts and the socially-recognized purposes of the genre. Students wrote sentences and paragraphs on their own after being taught about some rhetorical principles such as how to write expository essay by comparison and contrast. The teacher, therefore, could make either direct or indirect feedback on lexico-grammatical features of the writing if she wished. During the study, Jane taught EFL writing to advanced 18-20 year-old Chinese learners of English in her

university. Table 1 below provides an overview of the teacher, Jane, and her teaching background.

TABLE 1
Teacher and class information

Ethnicity	Educational background	Experience of teaching EFL writing	Students	Writing Course	Teaching hours
Chinese	MA English Literature	5 yrs	35 freshmen (advanced)	required	16h/term

DATA COLLECTION

Case studies provide multiple perspectives (Yin, 2003) on the phenomena being studied, typically by making use of various sources of data to get 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973). Data were collected in an intact writing class over a 2-month period using observation, document analysis and post-observation interview.

Firstly, I observed Jane's writing instruction so as to understand the context in which she provided feedback. Secondly, after the observation, marked assignments with Jane's written feedback were collected in order to investigate how she actually focused on discourse when providing written feedback for individual students. Thirdly, Jane's subsequent oral feedback for the whole class after the written feedback was observed in order to further understand her feedback focus and strategy. Fourthly, the post-observation interview with stimulated recall protocols was conducted to explore Jane's feedback beliefs and how she made specific decisions when providing feedback to individual students.

Four data sets were obtained: (1) recordings of four 50-minute writing lessons; (2) 10 randomly selected marked assignments, which students completed after class, with the teacher's written feedback; (3) recordings of two 15-minute oral feedback sessions to the whole; (4) a 90-minute interview with stimulated recall protocols.

Data Analysis

Rich understanding of the case was attained by using multiple sources of data, which were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively with regard to each research question. For the purposes of this study, feedback was defined as teacher feedback to the whole class and feedback to individual students, including both oral feedback and written feedback, which could be generic or text-specific with margin comments or end comments. Data were analysed inductively in order to understand the teacher's feedback focus, strategy and belief rather than judging her feedback according to any existing theory. The analytical categories were worked out according to what the teacher did and her own explanation for why she provided feedback in the way she did. I now examine these in turn.

Feedback practices

An analysis of both the written feedback to individual students' scripts and the subsequent oral feedback to the whole class was carried out. A feedback episode was identified as any written or verbal comment on students' scripts and includes error correction and positive or negative assessments in which the teacher paid "special attention to the areas or features of writing" (Lee, 2008) revealing what she valued in student writing and helped establish what students should look to accomplish in their subsequent work/revision.

TABLE 2
Diagram of analytical categories of feedback episodes

Feedback Episode (FE)	**Analytical categories**		**Samples** **Feedback Episode samples are in *italics* with the coding in square brackets**
Feedback focus	Discourse focus	1). Purpose, audience, and context of situation 2). How information is organised into coherent and interconnected pieces of language, as distinct from unorganized strings of sentences (e.g., *cohesion, macro-structure, metadiscourse* etc.)	*parting? or departing* [focusing on lexico-grammar, negative, direct correction, margin]; *Irrelevant to the topic sentence* [focusing on topic development, negative, indirect correction, problem, margin]; *Rich details* [focusing on rhetorical function, positive, margin]; *Use 'firstly', 'secondly', 'thirdly' to help the reader follow your ideas* [focusing on metadiscourse, negative, direct correction, margin]; *You'd better state your position clearly to the audience* [focusing on purpose, audience and context of situation, negative, indirect correction, problem, margin]; *While (is used as) conj. within, not between sentences, you can use "however", "but"* [focusing on cohesion, negative, direct correction, margin]; *In the five paragraph writing argumentation, you need to summarize the main points in the conclusive paragraph to end the essay.* [focusing on macrostructure, negative, indirect correction, suggestion, end]; *Why do you use "on the other hand"? Do you think this idea is a contrast to the above one?* [focusing on cohesion, negative, indirect correction, reason, margin]
	Non-discourse focus	1). Lexico-grammar: grammatical or lexical items; 2). Unclear Meaning: Poorly expressed sentences, some vague expression in the meaning itself; 3). Others: punctuation, Chinglish.	

TABLE 2

Diagram of analytical categories of feedback episodes (continued)

Feedback Episode (FE)	**Analytical categories**	**Samples** **Feedback Episode samples are in *italics* with the coding in square brackets**
Feedback strategy	Positive	Each time when teachers make comments which praise, commend or compliment student writers or which indicates a standard has been met.
	Negative	Each time when teachers criticize, mention weakness or suggest improvement 1) Direct Correction. The explicit provision of overt correction by the teacher for the student writer so that the student(s) need only transcribe the correction into the final version in revision.
		2) Indirect Correction. A comment that the teacher made to indicate that an error existed: by pointing out what the discourse problem was [problem] by describing what is wrong [reason] by providing/suggesting the solution but not making any correction [suggestion].

Firstly, the distribution of focus on discourse was compared with that on grammar and unclear meaning to show the extent to which Jane focused on discourse. An example of her focus on discourse rather than grammar was when she pointed out that a sentence should be revised as a topic sentence even though it was grammatically correct. Secondly, her focus on discourse was further analyzed and categorized to show the discourse features she focused on. Thirdly, the feedback strategies were analysed in terms of the overall orientation (positive or negative), the explicitness (direct or indirect correction) and the location (margin or end comments) of feedback. I now show the analysis of feedback episodes (FE) regarding feedback focus and strategy in Table 2.

Feedback beliefs

I define teacher beliefs as 'psychologically held understandings, premises and propositions about the world that are felt to be true'

(Richardson, 1996:103). Here I am concerned mainly with the teacher's beliefs about writing, feedback and discourse.

Data obtained from the interview were analyzed qualitatively by summarizing the statements and finding the themes to show Jane's stated beliefs and explanation of her decisions for how to provide feedback. These beliefs were then compared with her feedback practices in the ongoing document analysis. Jane's observed feedback focus and strategies were compared to her stated beliefs so as to investigate the degree of consistency between them. Data obtained from stimulated recall protocols were used to explain why certain practices contravened the stated beliefs and how she made adjustments in practices when she was confronted with constraints.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In contrast to Lee (2008b), this study found that Jane's feedback practices *did* show a distinct focus on discourse features in addition to corrections of lexico-grammatical errors, and that this discourse-focused feedback practice was underpinned by strong beliefs in the importance of discourse for student writing. Jane's observed feedback practices were also generally in line with her stated beliefs. I now discuss the findings in more detail in line with my three research questions.

Feedback practices on discourse

Jane had a strong focus on discourse features in her written feedback (60%) compared with lexico-grammar (25%), unclear meaning (14%) and other focus (1%). Six discourse features emerged from the data: (1) cohesion, (2) meta-discourse, (3) macrostructure, (4) topical development, (5) rhetorical function development, and (6) purpose, audience and context of situation. She did not pay equal attention to each:

82% global coherence - topical development/rhetorical function development/macrostructure.

13% local coherence, including cohesion and meta-discourse.

4% text external discourse properties - purpose, audience and context of situation.

1% meta-discourse - only one comment.

Regarding feedback strategies, Jane gave more negative feedback as indirect correction in-text when focusing on discourse. Most of her written feedback episodes were negative (96%) either directly or indirectly, among which she gave more indirect correction (89%) (see Table 3 below). She provided more margin comments (66%) than end comments (34%). In end comments she only focused on global coherence including topical development, rhetorical function and macrostructure. Local coherence (e.g., cohesion) was corrected directly or indirectly in-text or in the margin. She pointed out the problems rather than providing solutions. Three stages of movement in indirect written feedback from implicitness to explicitness were identified: (1) pointing out the problem 51%; (2) diagnosing reasons for the problem 27%; (3) providing suggestions 11%. In the indirect correction 11% out of 89% achieved all three stages (Problem-Reason-Solution), and 27% covered two stages (Problem-Reason) (see Table 3 below).

In oral feedback episodes, Jane was found to have a strong focus (87.5%) on discourse but the movement in strategies was more complex. She used oral feedback as part of classroom teaching to elicit what had been misunderstood or simply reviewed what had been taught in previous lessons with more specific examples selected from students' own writing. Her focus in oral feedback was consistent with that in her written feedback mainly on in-text discourse properties which included local coherence (e.g., cohesion, meta-discourse markers) and global coherence (e.g., topic

development, macrostructure, and rhetorical function). The text-external discourse properties were not stressed in her oral feedback.

TABLE 3
Analysis of Jane's written feedback episodes

Written feedback episodes	**Positive**	**Negative**			
	Praise	Direct correction	Indirect correction		
			Problem	Reason	Suggestion
Margin comments: 48 (66%)			2	1	
Purpose, audience and context of situation		3	4	2	
Cohesion			12	7	1
Topical development	1		8	3	2
Rhetorical function					2
Macrostructure		1			
Metadiscourse					
End comments: 25 (34%)					
Purpose, audience and context of situation					
Cohesion			6	4	1
Topical development	1	1	2	2	1
Rhetorical function	1		3	1	1
Macrostructure					
Metadiscourse					
Total: 73	3 (4%)	5 (7%)	37 (51%)	20 (27%)	8 (11%)
			65 (89%)		

A major difference (see Appendix A for the sample analysis) between her written and oral feedback lies in the extent to which she shifted from one focus to another in one episode. When she focused on one problem in oral feedback, the contextual interaction provided opportunity to move onto another focus and then back again. The strategies she used in oral feedback were more complicated in the dimension of direct and indirect correction. The process of oral feedback moved from pointing out problems to making corrections via discussion. She provided indirect correction by asking questions,

finding the solution gradually in classroom discussion and finally providing direct correction. However, very often these strategies were not used in a linear way.

Stated Beliefs

Jane's stated beliefs showed that she recognised the important role of understanding discourse in writing, and that she valued the provision of explicit feedback to students on their use of discourse features. She gave three reasons for focusing on discourse in her feedback: (1) students' needs, (2) school curriculum, and (3) previous success in teaching coherence.

Firstly, she provided feedback on discourse problems because she thought that students had serious discourse problems regarding organization, cohesive devices, and topic development. For example, Jane said,

> *I think students have problems in linking ideas, for example, though they use connectives like 'because', 'so', 'although' and 'but' very often, sometimes the ideas themselves are not logically connected in nature… We are training them to write clear topic sentences but students have a lot of problems in selecting supporting details, and even they are lack the process of checking relevancy, unity and they do not use many techniques to improve coherence...I think the details (in their writing) should be well-selected and relevant to the topic...I think they can find all kinds of writing information from many different sources (grammar books) but they need guidance to their own writing pointing to their own weakness such as organization/development of ideas/cohesion.*

Secondly, Jane provided feedback on discourse because it was expected within the existing writing curriculum. In the interview, Jane explained,

> *We have a fixed curriculum and we have to finish teaching certain modes of writing in a period of time (16 weeks)…for example, to make student conscious of the writing purpose, to help them know better*

> *about possible organization patterns, to let them take into consideration of organization patterns when they are doing a particular type of writing...I think feedback is very important. Actually many teachers and I agree that giving feedback is probably even more important than giving lectures in class. You know, even without our teaching, they can write a lot but even we teach a lot, they (some students) still write as 'poorly' as before. Then in this case, with feedback we can actually help them as both a reader and a teacher because written feedback to individual students is more directly to help them with their weakness. It is more helpful. That is why we think feedback is more important than lecturing.*

Thirdly, Jane's previous teaching experience made her think that her teaching strategies would help students improve coherence in their writing. For instance, she said,

> *I don't think it's difficult for students to tell which kinds of expression is more logical, and it is not that difficult for students to rearrange their passage in a more cohesive way in my class…but if students are not conscious of what to improve, it is very likely for them to ignore the problem…it's not a writing technique which will take students quite long time to learn or acquire. They just need to be aware of that more consciously.*

In contrast to Lee (2008b), this study found that Jane's feedback practices and feedback beliefs are generally consistent with each other. Jane stated her beliefs on the importance of providing feedback on discourse, which clearly explained why she provided more feedback on discourse features rather than lexico-grammatical errors.

The relationship of feedback practices and beliefs

Jane gave feedback on discourse features in different ways for a number of reasons. Although her observed feedback practices were generally in line with her stated beliefs, there were some mismatches. Factors such as time pressure, workload, school

curriculum and learner differences often caused her to adapt her practices such that they no longer reflected her stated beliefs. She also mentioned the importance of student affect when providing feedback generally, and stated that she varied her feedback strategies depending on how she thought these strategies would impact on students both cognitively and affectively.

In terms of her concerns for student affect, the findings show congruence between her stated beliefs and her observed practices. For example, most of her feedback episodes were negative (96%) rather than positive because she believed that negative feedback was helpful. Jane told me in the interview,

> *I think they want to know if they write well and they also want to know where they need to improve and what they can improve. They don't feel OK, if I just write down comments like 'perfect'.*

However, in one script she provided positive feedback even though the student's performance was not very good. In the interview, when Jane was asked to recall what she thought of the student's writing in terms of supporting details in the development of the topic, she said,

> *When I provided the praise comment of 'rich detail', I was thinking it was a good way to motivate the student by praising him/her for some good point then pointed the problem. I did think the details were not enough but to some extent the supporting details for the first sub-idea were quite OK compared with other students' writing. So I thought I could make the praise comment and hopefully the student would feel being encouraged in some way.*

Table 4 shows the summary of her stated beliefs, feedback practices and underlying reasons. To sum up, Jane's practices took textual manipulation beyond the sentence level to the discourse level and her feedback was an important part of her writing instruction with a strong focus on six discourse features: (1) cohesion, (2) meta-discourse, (3) macrostructure, (4) topical development, (5) rhetorical

function development, and (6) purpose, audience and context of situation. This study concludes that providing feedback on students' discourse problems is a highly complex process. Teachers require discourse awareness, confidence in their own knowledge, experience and time in order to give feedback in the way they would like in order to best help students improve their writing.

TABLE 4
Adjustment of feedback practices with the underlying beliefs and contextual constraints

Aspect	Stated belief	Observed practice	Explanation given
Feedback strategy	Preference of negative feedback	Mitigated ways to make comments	Student expectations, affect and students' motivation
	Preference of oral feedback	Oral feedback to the whole class after written feedback to individual student	Due to the time pressure and heavy workload, individual oral feedback was impossible
	Preference of text-specific comments	General comments in written feedback but in oral feedback provided text-specific comments on sample scripts for the whole class	Text-specific comments were more time-consuming but still very necessary for the students
	Preference of guiding students	Inconsistent criteria in written feedback	No guideline and lack of self-confidence
	Preference of explicit feedback to students	Indirect comments in written feedback and obvious movement from indirect feedback to direct feedback in oral feedback to whole class	Students' capability to find out the solution by themselves. Do not want to be bossy

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

The findings of this study have clear implications for writing pedagogy, curricular reform and teacher training. Research on the nature of texts and on-text construction has had an impact on instructional practices with L2 students (Lee, 2002; Basturkmen,

2002). If curricular reform is to promote the teaching of discourse in writing, then teachers need to be given training and support in how to provide feedback on this aspect of writing. These findings can shed light on the complex range of factors which influence the feedback strategies teachers choose.

To conclude this paper, I indicate a limitation. The report for one case inevitably means that the findings directly relate to the idiosyncratic nature of the teacher, Jane. But the close investigation of Jane's feedback on discourse may provide an example for other teachers in similar contexts, especially those who believe feedback on discourse is important but do not know how to elaborate on discourse features in their feedback. Further research will be conducted with the involvement of more teachers. Teacher training aimed at improving teachers' written feedback in general and feedback on discourse in particular can be enhanced by involving cooperative dialogue with teachers about their own practice to help raise awareness of how they are teaching and why. By understanding teachers' beliefs and the reasons underlying their feedback practices, teacher educators can help teachers confront the difficulties they face when providing feedback on discourse.

THE AUTHOR

Zhenjing Wang works at the Department of Foreign Languages at China University of Geosciences, Beijing, China. She is doing a PhD at the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics, University of Auckland, New Zealand. Her areas of interest include discourse analysis, EFL writing and teacher cognition. She won the David Nunan Institute for Language Education Travel Award for 2011. Her conference presentation at the 45th Annual TESOL Convention gained an Award for International Participation at TESOL.

REFERENCES

Ashwell, T. (2000). Patterns of teacher response to student writing in a multiple-draft composition classroom. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 9*, 227-257.

Basturkmen, H. (2002). Clause relations and macro patterns: Cohesion, coherence and the writing of advanced ESOL students. *English Teaching Forum, 1*, 50-56.

Basturkmen, H., Loewen, S. & Ellis, R. (2004). Teachers' stated beliefs about incidental focus on form and their classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics, 25*(2), 243-272.

Bazerman, C. & Prior, P. (Eds). (2004). *What writing does and how it does it: An introduction to analyzing texts and textual practices.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bitchener, J., Stuart, Y. & Cameron, D. (2005). The effect of different types of corrective feedback on ESL student writing. Journal of *Second Language Writing, 14*(3), 191-205.

Block, J. & Hazelip, K. (1995). Teachers' beliefs and belief systems. In L. Anderson (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of teaching and teacher education* (2nd Ed) (pp.25-28) Oxford: Elsevier.

Borg, S. (1998). Teachers' pedagogical systems and grammar teaching: A qualitative study. *TESOL Quarterly, 32*(1), 9-38.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe and do. *Language Teaching, 36*(2), 81-109.

Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education.* Continuum: London.

Borko, H. & Niles, J. (1982). Factors contributing to teachers' judgments about students and decisions about grouping students for reading instruction. *Journal of Reading Behavior, 14*, 127-136.

Burns, A. (1992). Teacher beliefs and their influence on classroom practice. *Prospect, 7*(3), 56-66.

Connor, U. & Mauranen, A. (1999). Linguistic analysis of grant proposals: European Union research grants. *English for Specific Purposes, 18*(1), 47-62.

Connor, U. (2000). Variation in rhetorical moves in grant proposals of U humanists and scientists. *Text, 20*(1), 1-28.

Diab, R. (2005). Teachers' and students' beliefs about responding to ESL writing: A case study. *TESL Canada Journal, 23*, 28-43.

Fang, Z. (1996). A review of research on teacher beliefs and practice. *Educational Research, 38*(1), 47-65.

Ferris, D. & Roberts, B. (2001). Error feedback in L2 writing classes. How explicit does it need to be? *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*(3), 161-184.

Ferris, D.R. (2004). The "grammar correction" debate in L2 writing: Where are we, and where do we go from here? (and what do we do in the meantime...?). *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*, 49-62.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. In C. Geertz (Ed.), *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (pp.3-30). New York: Basic Books.

Goldstein, L.M. (2004). Questions and answers about teacher written commentary and student revision: teachers and students working together. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*, 63-80.

Graden, E.C. (1996). How language teachers' beliefs about reading instruction are mediated by their beliefs about students. *Foreign Language Annals, 29*(3), 387-395.

Hyland, K. (2004). Disciplinary interactions: Metadiscourse in L2 postgraduate writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*(2), 13-151.

Hyland, F. & Hyland, K. (2001). Sugaring the pill. Praise and criticism in written feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*(3), 185-212.

Karavas-Doukas, E. (1996). Using attitude scales to investigate teachers' attitudes to the communicative approach. *ELT Journal, 50*(3), 187-198.

Lee, I. (2004). Error correction in L2 secondary writing classrooms: The case of Hong Kong. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*, 285-312.

Lee, I. (2008a). Understanding teachers' written feedback practices in Hong Kong secondary classrooms. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 17*, 69-85.

Lee, I. (2008b). Ten mismatches between teachers' beliefs and written feedback practice. *ELT Journal, 62*(3), 1-10.

Nunan, D. (1987). Communicative language teaching: making it work. *ELT Journal, 41*(2), 136-145.

Pajares, F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Clearing up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 62*(2), 307-332.

Phipps, S. (2010). *Language teacher education, beliefs and classroom practices.* Saarbrucken: Lambert Academic Publishing.

Phipps, S. & Borg, S. (2009). Exploring tensions between teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices. *System, 37*(3), 380-390.

Richards, J. (1998). *Beyond training.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richardson, V. (1996). The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula, P. Buttery & E. Guyton (Eds), *Handbook of research on teacher education: A project of the Association of Teacher Educators* (2nd Ed) ((pp.102-119). New York: MacMillan.

She, H.C. (2000). The interplay of a biology teacher's beliefs, teaching practices, and gender-based student-teacher classroom interaction. *Educational Research, 42*(1), 100-111.

Suri, L.Z. & McCoy, K.F. (1993). *Correcting discourse-level errors in a CALL system for second language learners.* Technical Report No. 94-02, University of Delaware.

Todd, R., Khongput, S. & Darasawang, P. (2007). Coherence, cohesion and comments on students' academic essays. *Assessing Writing, 12*, 10-25.

Vygotsky, L. (1980). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research* (3rd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A: THE SAMPLE ANALYSIS OF ORAL FEEDBACK EPISODE

Episode 3: The statement of a sub-idea is incomplete or crippled. (Topic development)

Firstly, when we Chinese get a present from our friend, we will open it after the friend leaves. Maybe we prefer to open it when we are alone. But in America, people are used to opening to it right in their friend's presence, which makes Chinese feels uneasy. Secondly, the choices of birthday present are different between C and A. Thirdly, the styles of wrapping the present are different... [Jane first showed the sample and then provided oral feedback.]

… The third problem is that you have a clear main idea and know how to develop the topic but the statement of sub-idea is crippled and uncompleted. For example, let's look at this paragraph. Actually I have taught it in class but it seemed it is still a common problem in your writing. Can you find which statement is crippled? **[1.Raise a question for group discussion]** Do you still remember what you have learnt about crippled sentences/expression? It means the uncompleted statement. **[2.Review what has been taught in the previous writing class.]** You can have a discussion now and then let's find the solution…." (JOR 30137:35-44) (after discussion) "… Yes, I agree with you that the student failed to give the reader an overall idea for the first comparison. **[3. Diagnose the problem]** There needs a completed statement for the first sub-idea.[4. Suggest the solution] Let me explain the three sub-ideas. Here I did not reveal the third one due to the limited space.

The third sub-idea is about the different style of wrapping the present with supporting details like different choice of the colour of wrapping paper. Did you pay attention to her organization of the paragraph? **[5 &1. Move to point out another problem by raising a question.]** Her arrangement is 'when to open the present—what to choose for present—how to wrap the present'. Although the student writer used the connectives like 'firstly, secondly and thirdly' in order to guide readers, do you think it can show the order of the action? ... No. **[3. Diagnose the problem]** What do you think the order of the sub-ideas should be? It would be better if the student writer organize the paragraph as 'what to choose for present —how to wrap the present —when to open the present'. **[4. Suggest the solution]** Do you agree? So when you write a paragraph, you need to think how to organize it in order to help readers easily follow your idea. Now let's go back to the problem of uncompleted statement. **[back to the dominant feedback focus]**The statement of the first subidea is crippled. We can revise it by mentioning both of two points in the first sentence before making comparison. It can be revised as 'when getting the present, Chinese people and westerners react differently to show their thanks. Chinese people will... However, westerners will... **[6. Correct the discourse error]** (JOR 30141:55-42:33)